

habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan;

(6) these forested wetlands represent one of the most valuable and productive wildlife habitat types in the United States, and have extremely high recreational value for hunters, anglers, birdwatchers, nature photographers, and others; and

(7) the Cat Island area is deserving of inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

#### SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS:

For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term "Refuge" means the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge; and

(2) the term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

#### SEC. 4. PURPOSES.

The purposes for which the Refuge is established and shall be managed are—

(1) to conserve, restore, and manage habitats as necessary to contribute to the migratory bird population goals and habitat objective as established through the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture;

(2) to conserve, restore, and manage the significant aquatic resource values associated with the area's forested wetlands and to achieve the habitat objectives of the "Mississippi River Aquatic Resources Management Plan";

(3) to conserve, enhance, and restore the historic native bottomland community characteristics of the lower Mississippi alluvial valley and its associated fish, wildlife, and plant species;

(4) to conserve, enhance, and restore habitat to maintain and assist in the recovery of endangered, and threatened plants and animals;

(5) to provide opportunities for priority public wildlife dependent uses for compatible hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation; and

(6) to encourage the use of volunteers and facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, local communities, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System and public participation in the conservation of those resources.

#### SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF REFUGE.

(a) ACQUISITION BOUNDARY.—The Secretary is authorized to establish the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge, consisting of approximately 36,500 acres of land and water, as depicted upon a map entitled "Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge-Proposed", dated February 8, 2000, and available for inspection in appropriate offices of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(b) BOUNDARY REVISIONS.—The Secretary may make such minor revisions of the boundary designated under this section as may be appropriate to carry out the purposes of the Refuge or to facilitate the acquisition of property within the Refuge.

(c) ACQUISITION.—The Secretary is authorized to acquire the lands and waters, or interests therein, within the acquisition boundary described in subsection (a) of this section.

(d) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish the Refuge by publication of a notice to that effect in the Federal Register and publications of local circulation whenever sufficient property has been acquired to constitute an area that can be efficiently managed as a National Wildlife Refuge.

#### SEC. 6. ADMINISTRATION.

The Secretary shall administer all lands, waters, and interests therein acquired under this Act in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act

(16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.). The Secretary may use such additional statutory authority as may be available for the conservation of fish and wildlife, and the provision of fish- and wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities as the Secretary considers appropriate to carry out the purposes of this Act.

#### SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Department of the Interior—

(1) such funds as may be necessary for the acquisition of lands and waters designated in section 5(c); and

(2) such funds as may be necessary for the development, operation, and maintenance of the Refuge.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 3292, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3292 was introduced by our distinguished colleague the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER). This measure would establish the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana.

Cat Island is a unique habitat of bottomland hardwoods that has never been leveed, and it is one of the few natural resources along the Mississippi River that still experiences seasonal overflows. It is an area that is teeming with wildlife, and it contains prime habitat for many species of shorebirds, 1,000-year-old bald cypress trees, and millions of migratory ducks.

According to testimony received, the forested wetlands typical of Cat Island represent one of the most valuable and productive wildlife habitat types in the United States.

Under the terms of H.R. 3292, the Secretary of the Interior would be directed to acquire by purchase or donated property that would form the basis of the proposed Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge.

At the subcommittee markup, I offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute that expanded the size of Cat Island Refuge from 9,477 acres to 36,500 acres and clarified the purposes for establishing the refuge. This amendment was supported by both the sponsor and by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Once established, this would become the 21st National Wildlife Refuge in the State of Louisiana.

I want to compliment the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER) for his outstanding leadership in this matter.

I know that he has spent an extraordinary amount of time working with both local and State officials, industry representatives, and conservation groups to develop this refuge. This is how the process should work, and I remain convinced that local support for a proposed refuge is absolutely essential.

Madam Speaker, I urge an aye vote on H.R. 3292.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3292, a bill which would establish the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge in the State of Louisiana.

The biological diversity and ecological significance of Cat Island is most impressive. It would appear by all measures that this habitat in the bayou of southern Louisiana would be a handsome addition to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

I believe that the bill was greatly improved by the Committee on Resources when the total authorization for land acquisition was, by unanimous vote, increased from 9,400 acres to 36,500 acres. It makes sense since the land is presently available and because the entire tract is ecologically significant to ensure the protection of the core 9,400 acres. I want to thank the sponsor of the bill, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER), for agreeing to add these additional lands.

It is also my understanding that the administration fully supports H.R. 3292. The Fish and Wildlife Service has asked for \$4.1 million in their fiscal year 2001 budget request to begin the acquisition process for this new refuge. Hopefully, with the passage of this legislation, the Fish and Wildlife Service can get started on this process very soon.

The House should pass H.R. 3292 today. I urge all Members to support this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3292, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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TAKING CERTAIN LAND INTO TRUST FOR MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate

bill (S. 1967) to make technical corrections to the status of certain land held in trust for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, to take certain land into trust for that Band, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1967

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. STATUS OF CERTAIN INDIAN LANDS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) all land taken in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians on or after December 23, 1944, shall be part of the Mississippi Choctaw Indian Reservation;

(2) all land held in fee by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians located within the boundaries of the State of Mississippi, as shown in the report entitled "Report of Fee Lands owned by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians", dated September 28, 1999, on file in the Office of the Superintendent, Choctaw Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, is hereby declared to be held by the United States in trust for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; and

(3) land made part of the Mississippi Choctaw Indian Reservation after December 23, 1944, shall not be considered to be part of the "initial reservation" of the tribe for the purposes of section 20(b)(1)(B)(ii) of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2719(b)(1)(B)(ii)).

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the application or the requirements of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) with respect to any lands held by or for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians regardless of when such lands were acquired.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 1967.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) for the purposes of controlling the time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank my friend from New Jersey for allowing me to control the balance of the time.

Madam Speaker, this is a simple bill which was approved in the Senate last

week by unanimous consent. The bill does three things. First, it moves all trust land taken for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians since December 23, 1944, and makes it part of the Mississippi Choctaw Indian Reservation.

Second, the bill takes all land owned in fee by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and incorporates it into trust land. And third, the bill makes these two provisions without affecting the statutes of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

All lands affected by this legislation are owned by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, with some parcels dating back many decades. During the past 20 years, Madam Speaker, the tribe has attempted time and time again to transfer the land through the regular process established by the United States Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Unfortunately, the Department has failed to act on these applications in an efficient and prompt manner.

The applications filed by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians are supported by the State of Mississippi and the county and municipal governments in the vicinity of the property.

What is at stake here are critically needed services for the tribe. A new school, housing, and a medical clinic are among the projects which have been delayed because of inaction by the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The existing school has had dozens of safety violations issued by the BIA, and the medical clinic will not pass its next inspection. Just as important, thousands of Mississippi Choctaws are living in unacceptable conditions due to the lack of available housing.

Madam Speaker, the tribe has followed the regular process and lived up to its obligations. But, for whatever reasons, perhaps a lack of resources, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have failed to meet the Government's duty. That is why we need to provide this legislative remedy and allow the tribe to move forward with building a new school, a medical clinic, and housing for its members.

Led by their capable Chief, Phillip Martin, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is making great strides in education, job creation, and the preservation of their cultural heritage. The Government should not be standing in the way of their continued progress.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the bill and sending it on to the President.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, this legislation would bring some

8,700 acres of land into Federal trust status for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians outside of the regulatory framework established for bringing Indian land into trust. It is important for the tribe to have this land put into trust status in order to continue their economic development plans.

The Bureau of Indian affairs has indicated that it will take at least a year for them to process the land in accordance with the land-into-trust regulations. As we hear from numerous tribes, this would have a detrimental effect on the tribe's current and future economic development and expansion.

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The administration supports this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support it as well.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's kind remarks in support of this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1967.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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#### GRATON RANCHERIA RESTORATION ACT

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 946) to restore Federal recognition to the Indians of the Graton Rancheria of California.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 946

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Graton Rancheria Restoration Act".

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) In their 1997 Report to Congress, the Advisory Council on California Indian Policy specifically recommended the immediate legislative restoration of the Graton Rancheria.

(2) The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Tribal Council has made the express decision to restrict gaming consistent with the provisions of this Act.

#### SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act:

(1) The term "Tribe" means the Indians of the Graton Rancheria of California.

(2) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(3) The term "Interim Tribal Council" means the governing body of the Tribe specified in section 7.

(4) The term "member" means an individual who meets the membership criteria under section 6(b).